

The Reuben James

Woody Guthrie



1. Have you heard of a ship called the good Reuben James
Manned by hard fighting men both of honor and fame?
She flew the Stars and Stripes of the land of the free
But tonight she's in her grave at the bottom of the sea.
Chorus:
Tell me what were their names, tell me what were their names?
Did you have a friend on the good Reuben James?
What were their names, tell me, what were their names?
Did you have a friend on the good Reuben James?
2. Well, a hundred men went down in that dark watery grave
When that good ship went down only forty-four were saved.
'Twas the last day of October we saved the forty-four
From the cold ocean waters and the cold icy shore.
3. It was there in the dark of that uncertain night
That we watched for the U-boats and waited for a fight.
Then a whine and a rock and a great explosion roared
And they laid the Reuben James on that cold ocean floor.
4. Now tonight there are lights in our country so bright
In the farms and in the cities they're telling of the fight.
And now our mighty battleships will steam the bounding main
And remember the name of that good Reuben James.

"The Sinking of the Reuben James" is a song by Woody Guthrie about the sinking of the U.S. convoy escort, the Reuben James, which was the first U.S. naval ship sunk by German U-boats in World War II. The destroyer was sunk by a torpedo attack from German submarine U-552 on 31 October 1941. Of a crew of about 160, just 44 enlisted men and no officers survived. The song is set to the melody of **Wildwood Flower**, by Joseph Philbrick Webster.